
Education of Fine Arts/Music Librarians

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THE READER OF the foregoing articles cannot help but be struck by the diversity of library materials in the two comparable but more or less dissimilar subject areas of the visual arts and music. It is the wide-ranging scope of subjects and materials that creates a problem in the training of librarians to work equally comfortably and capably in the two areas.

The visual arts and music are the two subject areas in the humanities where the general library's collection must include more than printed book materials alone, and the art/music librarian must be prepared to work with an extended range of nonbook materials. The importance of these special nonbook materials in art and music cannot be overemphasized. Some years ago Asheim observed that the actual works of art are the real subject matter of the field, and the librarian must be familiar with them as well as the books about them.¹ Although the librarian in a general collection rarely spends his time with the artistic creations themselves, he must have knowledge of them (or representations of them) to serve his readers competently. In the general collection of a public or academic library, it is the representations or reproductions of the creative works that elevate nonbook materials to the level of importance they have for the art/music librarian. No other broad subject area in the general collection requires familiarity with material in such diverse forms as musical scores, slide and photographic reproductions, and phonograph recordings and tapes, as well as the mechanical devices for reproducing the musical sounds or projecting the image of the work of art.

In the best of all possible worlds, the art/music librarian will have not only training in the principles of librarianship, but also an understanding of the historical development of the various media of artistic expression, backed with solid studio training. The ideal

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librarian will slip easily from musicological inquiries involving historical information to practical questions concerning how-to-do-it techniques within the various handicrafts. Equally effortlessly, the ideal librarian will turn skillfully from selecting the art reproduction which most closely duplicates the color quality of an original painting to selecting the "definitive" recorded interpretation of a musical composition. Obviously this paragon is not to be found at work in every general art/music collection; no one is equally adept or interested in the various areas and materials within the broad sweep of the visual and musical arts.

With the realization that the practicing general art/music librarian must deal with not only books in the two subject areas but also with the equally important nonbook materials, how then is the would-be librarian to prepare for work in an art/music collection? The ideal general art/music librarian would have years of thorough academic training in both subject areas with at least an undergraduate major in each, and a solid library school education which included training in the specialized materials of each field. In actuality, no one comes to a general art/music assignment equally competent in both art and music. The typical prospective librarian presents himself for employment with reasonably adequate preparation in one field and, if the employer is fortunate, with some lesser background in the other. At present, it is safe to say that the supervisor of a general art/music collection, when selecting personnel, will attempt to balance his staff with some people whose major subject strength is in the visual arts and others whose primary interest is in music.

A distinction might be made between the subject background needed by the general art/music librarian in the public library and the general art/music librarian in the academic library. Although the similarity of subject training between the two is much greater than any difference, the public librarian must be more crafts- or hobby-oriented in his knowledge than the librarian in the academic world where many liberal arts institutions do not have students pursuing practical studio courses.

To maximize employment opportunities, the foresighted prospective art/music librarian should prepare himself with background in both subject areas. No art or music librarian today would question the need for subject training, and such training is presumed to be found in the appropriate subject department or school. The library school is not looked upon as a place for instruction in art history or musicology.

In speaking of the education of music librarians, Stevenson has pointed out that while the music librarian must have a combination of training from both the music school and the library school, the music school "has never indicated that the training of music librarians falls within its province."² The same statement can be made of art schools. The library school remains essentially the agency which provides training for art and music librarians.

Tangentially, it is interesting to note that art history departments have begun to emulate music schools by developing art bibliography or research methods courses for their students, taught in the department by the art library staff. These courses carry academic credit, and have proved successful. The courses at Stanford and Harvard Universities are outstanding examples. The Stanford course is a requirement for admission to any higher level seminar, while the Harvard course is an elective one. Introductory courses for music students in the materials of musicological research have been somewhat more common and these are usually taught by full-time music faculty rather than members of the music library staff.

A search of the current catalogs of accredited library schools reveals that not many library schools offer instruction in art or music librarianship. A large majority of library schools offer no specialized instruction in art or music librarianship beyond general coverage in a humanities bibliography or literature course. There are fourteen schools which do provide some specialized instruction on a regular basis; the specialized training typically consists of a single art bibliography or music bibliography course in which some attention is given to administrative and acquisitions procedures. Only one school offers a course in which both art and music materials are covered. In several cases the music bibliography courses are taught in the music department or school with the student given the option of electing the course for either music or library science credit. The art bibliography courses apparently are taught without exception in the library school for library science credit.

At only one library school (University of Denver) does the catalog list a course which combines both music and visual arts bibliography, suggesting that when a library school decides to offer instruction, the subject areas of the visual arts and music are considered sufficiently distinct to merit separate treatment. Surprisingly, only three of the fourteen library schools offering training (Columbia, Kent State, and the University of Michigan) provide courses regularly in both art and music librarianship. Two library schools (Pratt Institute and Queens

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College) offer a course in pictorial materials as well as the basic art librarianship course. Table 1 indicates the library schools which provide training in art and/or music librarianship.

TABLE 1

ACCREDITED LIBRARY SCHOOLS OFFERING INSTRUCTION IN ART AND MUSIC LIBRARIANSHIP

	Art Librarianship	Music Librarianship	Art/Music Bibliog- raphy (Combined)	Pictorial Materials
Columbia University	x	x		
University of Denver			x	
Geneseo (SUNY)		x		
University of Illinois		x		
Emporia Kansas State College		x		
Kent State University	x	x		
University of Maryland	x			
University of Michigan	x	x		
University of North Carolina	x			
North Texas State University		x		
Peabody College		x		
Pratt Institute	x			x
Queens College (CUNY)	x			x
Rosary College		x		

In addition to selecting courses treating art and music materials within the library school, students are encouraged to take related courses in the art or music department to supplement their subject area training. Those who come to library school with heavy specialization in one of the two subject areas may be counseled to take coursework in the other area to increase the possibility of employment in a general art/music position. Often, students who arrive at library school with a strong undergraduate major in either art or music hope to stay exclusively within that particular field, and this desire is even more pronounced in the student who has done graduate study in his chosen area.

Library schools today have become familiar with the advanced student who had originally planned to go into research or college teaching but, because of a dearth of jobs, has come to library school in the hope of finding employment in his subject area as a librarian. As a result of this influx of doctorates and near-doctorates, library employers in the art and music fields today can choose among applicants with intensive subject background; the generalist offering only an interest in art or music is often at a disadvantage. However, the library school student with extensive advanced training in either art or music is not likely to be primarily interested in the general art/music library position, nor will he necessarily prove an attractive applicant to

the personnel director of a public or academic library where librarians capable of dealing with both art and music materials are needed.

There are admittedly a number of competent librarians filling art/music positions in public and academic libraries who have never had library school coursework in art or music librarianship. Their subject area training in the visual arts and music, however and wherever acquired, coupled with their general training in librarianship, allows them to function satisfactorily. In specialized areas of library service, a background in the subjects concerned is vital. Library practices and techniques can be acquired on the job; subject expertise generally cannot.

The first requirement for the art/music library position—subject background—is preferably acquired before entering library school. The prospective librarian should bring to library school a solid background in both art and music. It is not likely that a double undergraduate major in both art and music will have been obtained, but insofar as possible, the student should have had art history courses covering the major periods of art, basic studio courses in various media, and music literature courses, music theory courses, and studio courses on a specific instrument. The terminology gained in these studies will prove invaluable in dealing with the public and in the technical processing of art/music materials.

Along with subject background, the prospective arts librarian should pursue some foreign language study, even if he wishes to work in a general collection. There has been a trend in the last ten years toward dropping the requirement of a reading knowledge of one modern foreign language for graduation from a library school. In the fields of the visual arts and music, foreign language study is still indispensable because there are basic works which exist only in languages other than English. Both fields are filled with foreign language terms. In libraries aspiring to provide any depth of service in the two subject areas, a general reading knowledge of German, French, and/or Italian is strongly recommended. Foreign language skill is especially important for the academic librarian. The author vigorously urges the continuation of the language requirement for library school students wishing to enter the art/music field.

Before the final choice of a library school, the student should give careful attention to the possibilities of specialization in art/music librarianship in the schools being considered. Once enrolled, the student should plan his program to allow election of the offerings in both art and music librarianship. Careful planning may be necessary as

most library schools do not offer these courses every semester. If the library school chosen does not offer organized courses in special subject areas, the student should investigate the feasibility of electing independent study in the art and music fields.

The student should also elect the course in his library school which will give him knowledge of nonbook materials. Phonograph recordings, pictorial material, and musical scores are acquired and arranged differently from books, and the art/music librarian faces the problem of physically integrating nonbook items into his collection. In library schools which do not offer a course in nonbook materials, an excellent substitute might be the course in school media materials.

A possible additional opportunity for the library school student is practical work experience in an art/music collection while pursuing his classwork. If a practicum can be arranged in only one subject area, the student who wishes to enter a general art/music position might seriously consider choosing the subject area in which he has the lesser amount of training. A carefully selected assignment is obviously desirable to provide the student with the broadest possible experience in a limited time, but any experience at all in an art/music collection, even routine clerical duties, is not to be scorned if it introduces the neophyte to the specialized materials of art and music librarianship. In the smaller general art/music collection, any tasks will provide the opportunity for observation of professional duties and activities.

In addition to library school courses and practical experience, the student should investigate courses in art or music open to him in the subject departments of his college or university. Because the student's time in library school is limited, perusal of the applicable catalogs outlining electives in art and music is as important as thorough study of the library school catalog *before* the library school program is begun.

It is impossible to itemize in detail a "correct" curriculum for persons who hope to become art/music librarians. Undergraduate study in both fields is obviously a basic requirement. The study of at least one modern foreign language is important. Within the library school curriculum, the courses in art and music librarianship and a suitable course in nonbook materials are mandatory. In such general library courses as administration, adult education, and readers' services, the student should be alert to slant his work toward the areas of art and music librarianship with which he will be concerned on the job. The election of courses in the art and music divisions of the college or university is equally important to round out subject background.

Specialized education for art and music librarianship will

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undoubtedly continue to develop as increasing numbers of students with strong subject background appear. The library school has a responsibility to offer training for students who wish to work in art/music positions, and in the foreseeable future it is the library school, not the art or music school, which will provide the opportunity for training in art/music librarianship.

References

1. Asheim, Lester. *The Humanities and the Library*. Chicago, ALA, 1957, p. 100.
2. Stevenson, Gordon. "Training for Music Librarianship: A Survey of Current Opportunities," *Library Trends*, 8:502, April 1960.

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